

MOTHS WHICH HAVE COLONIZED THE ISLE OF WIGHT IN RECENT YEARS

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Eight species of Lepidoptera have colonized the Isle of Wight in this decade, and two wainscots have been breeding here for longer. Details of their establishment, dates, localities and abundance are given here. During the last ten years it has become normal to have mild winters and an early spring. This warmer climate has certainly influenced the appearance of the species considered here, and it will be interesting to see whether other ones will follow in the next decade or so.

EPIPHYAS POSTVITTANA (WALK.) (TORTRICIDAE)

This indigenous Australian species is apparently adventitious to the British Isles. It was first found established at Newquay, Cornwall, in 1936 (Meyrick, 1937), and later spread all through that county and into Devon (see Bradley *et al.*, 1973). The first record for Hampshire was at Alverstoke on 21.ix.62 (Sadler, 1967). It then spread further east and north reaching Kirby Muxloe, Leicestershire, in September 1989 (McPhail, 1990). It was noted in Cardiff, Wales, in 1989 (Hancock, 1989). Prior to 1936, there were several records of specimens reared from larvae imported on New Zealand apples. In New Zealand it is an important pest in fruit orchards and commonly known as the light-brown apple moth or apple leaf-roller (Bradley *et al.*, 1973).

The first example of this variable tortricid in the Isle of Wight was taken at light during an evening meeting of the Isle of Wight Natural History & Archaeological Society at Osborne (SZ523947) on 13.vi.91. I recorded two the following year at Freshwater (SZ337870), on 13.vi & 9.viii.92, and it soon became established in all parts of the Island. It is now the most abundant tortricid that I have recorded, and the larvae have infested *Coronella* in the garden.

PHLYCTAENIA PERLUCIDALIS (HÜBN.) (PYRALIDAE)

The first British specimens were taken flying at dusk at Woodwalton Fen, Huntingdonshire (Mere & Bradley, 1957) on 24.vi.51. Others have occurred in the fens of Huntingdonshire & Cambridgeshire, and also on the coasts of Lincolnshire, Suffolk, Essex & Kent. It was recorded as far north as Rudston in S.-E. Yorkshire in 1983 (Agassiz, 1984).

It was first recorded in the Isle of Wight on 27.vii.95 at Godshill (SZ522818) and a second example was taken at Queen's Bower (SZ569847) on 14.vii.96. It is likely that this species will become firmly established in future years, following the trend on the mainland.

UDEA FULVALIS (HÜBN.) (PYRALIDAE)

This species was first recorded from 'the Bournemouth district', 8.viii.27, probably at Parkstone, Dorset, where it was taken in some numbers in the 1930s and bred (Clutterbuck, 1930). Since then it has occurred in Hereford and South Dorset (Beirne, 1954) and a few more times in Hampshire and the Isle of Wight. The larvae

feed on Labiatae, including catmint (*Nepeta cataria*), black horehound (*Ballota nigra*) and meadow clary (*Salvia pratensis*).

This species first appeared at Freshwater on 8 & 11.viii.93, being the first records since 1959, when it became established in west Wight from 1955 to 1959. It has been taken every year since then at Freshwater, with seven in 1996 and two in July 1997. There have been no records outside Freshwater, so it would appear that it is either temporarily or permanently established in west Wight.

IDAEA VULPINARIA (H.-S.) (GEOMETRIDAE)

There was a considerable migration, either from the south-eastern counties of England or from the Continent along central and south-west England, in late vii & viii.91. Whether this large influx was due to a population explosion in the Thames Estuary or a migration from the Continent is not fully known. During this time there were ten records on the Island with three at Freshwater, three at Niton (SZ506763), and four at Chale Green. It was again noted at Niton in 1992 (two), and Chale Green in 1994 & 1995. The most recent sightings come from Freshwater on 17.vii.97 and Whitwell on 19.vii.97. It would appear that this insect has established itself at a low density in several localities in the south of the Island.

It is moderately common in north Kent, South Essex, the London area, Surrey, and parts of East Sussex, and has occurred annually at Portland, Dorset, since 1990.

THERA CUPRESSATA (GEYER) (GEOMETRIDAE)

The first record in Britain was from Walberton, Sussex, on l.ii.84 and in 1988 there were further records from Studland, Dorset, and St. Ives, Hampshire. In 1989 it was found to be breeding at Swanage.

It was first recorded on the Isle of Wight at Niton on 18.x.90 and appeared the following year at Chale Green. I recorded the first at Freshwater in 1994 and it was locally common at Bonchurch in the summer of 1995. One was recorded from the north of the island at Wootton (SZ539920) on 5.x.97 and it seems to be well established throughout the county.

EUPITHECIA ULTIMARIA (BOISD.) (GEOMETRIDAE)

This species was added to the British list on the strength of a single specimen taken in a Rothamsted Insect Survey light-trap at St. Martin's, Guernsey, on 20.viii.84 (Riley, 1985). Larvae were subsequently found on Tamarisk (*Tamarix gallica* L.) in Guernsey in the late summer of 1986 (Pect, 1988), but no moths were bred. The first specimen in England was taken on 20.vi.89 at Bishop's Stortford, Hertfordshire (Riley, 1991). On 29.vi.95 one occurred at Southsea, Hampshire, and that same year about two dozen larvae were beaten from Tamarisk at Hayling Island with the first emerging on 27.ix.95.

In the second half of July 1997 larvae were successfully beaten from Tamarisk from localities in Bembridge (SZ645876) (over twelve), Niton (one) and St. Lawrence (SZ535765) (one), and the first moths emerged on 9.viii.97. It would appear that this species is present in the east of the Island but should spread to the west in future years.

EILEMA CANIOLA (HÜBN) (ARCTIIDAE)

This species is locally common along the coasts of north and south Devon, Cornwall, Pembrokeshire, and other seaboard counties in west Wales. A handful of specimens have been reported in the last twenty years from East Sussex and south-east Kent, but it is not known whether they were residents or migrants. Its range abroad extends from southern Europe to western Germany, the Tyrol, Switzerland and South Hungary.

The first record of the species for Hampshire and the Isle of Wight was at Freshwater on 20.viii.92. A second specimen was recorded at the same locality on 11.viii.96 and another two at Bonchurch on 13.viii.96 and 9.ix.97. It is possible that it is breeding at a low density on the cliffs at Freshwater and the Undercliff at Niton. Any future records will confirm this to be the case, and that it has extended its resident range from south-west England.

EUPLAGIA QUADRIPUNCTARIA (PODA) (ARCTIIDAE)

This magnificent moth occurs along the south coast of Devon from Brixham eastwards to Seaton, spreading inland to the edge of Dartmoor. The few specimens recorded outside this area are presumed to be migrants. It is established throughout southern Europe, its range extending to Holland and Belgium. It was known as an inhabitant of the Channel Islands long before it became established in England.

The first record for the Island in recent years was that of a dead example which I found on a track leading from Tennyson Down on 11.ix.91 during a period of considerable migrant activity. A further example was taken at light at Freshwater on 19.viii.93, and the first specimen of ab. *lutescens* was observed at Chale Green (SZ484780) on 11.viii.95 with two other typical ones at Freshwater during the same year. Over a dozen were recorded at Bonchurch (SZ577781) and two at Freshwater in 1996. Seven ab. *lutescens* were recorded at Whitwell (SZ521782) and three at Freshwater in 1997, as well as six normal adults. A further four typical ones were observed at Ventnor (SZ566775) that year. It appears that conditions are conducive for successful breeding and it is now well established on the south of the Island. I am now seeing more examples of it than *Arctia caja* (L.), which has declined in numbers in recent years.

MYTHIMNA ALBIPUNCTA (D. & S.) (NOCTUIDAE)

This is a regular migrant, breeding in southern England in favourable seasons and occasionally becoming temporarily established in the south-east.

In the past two decades this has always been a regular autumnal migrant on the Isle of Wight, and by the late 1980s it seemed to have become established with records both in the summer and autumn from several localities in the south of the Island.

MYTHIMNA L-ALBUM (L.) (NOCTUIDAE)

This species was considered to be a very scarce migrant until the mid-1930s when it was found to be resident in South Devon. Since then it has become established along the southern coastline of England from Sussex to Cornwall, including the Isles of Scilly.

It became established in the west of the Island in the late 1970s and now may be observed in nearly all parts of the county.

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SHORT COMMUNICATION

An unusual refugium site for Old Lady moths?—On the 13.vii.97. I caught a single Old Lady *Mormo maura* L. in a Heath light trap at Bampton in Westmorland (NY5513). Two days later under a nearby bridge, I investigated a large nest made by Dippers *Cinclus cinclus*. The brood had only recently left the nest, which was a sturdy structure made of moss and mud, with a down-turned tubular entrance. It contained no less than twelve adult moths which rapidly flew out when disturbed, landing in dark crevices in the stonework. Several were rather worn but others appeared fresh and undamaged.—JONTY DENTON, 26 Bow St, Alton, Hants GU34 1NY.